855 hard toil of the fields. Too thinly clad and fed almost exclusively
857 on maize, they remain exposed to the inclemencies of the seasons, all day long, and spend the night in a house open to every wind. This produces selection proceeding from the disappearance of the weak, but those who resist such a regimen are then able to withstand any sort of hardship.

/Between pages 136 and 137 of the text, the two following photographs appear: "White Meo women"; "Embroidered Meo women."--translator/

591 /137/ When young men of the family marry, if there are sufficient fields to cultivate around the family house, they bring their wife there and live under the authority of the father of the family. If this is not the case, they go and establish themselves in the midst of an area needing to be cleared, and undertake the task courageously.

548 The chastity of Meo women does not seem to be as unassail-
836 able as that of Tho women, and some of them shamelessly engage in prostitution, and do not have to leave their place in the family on this account. When on an inspection tour in Dongvan, I remember that I expressed my astonishment at hearing hands clap each time I passed through certain woods, which surrounded a pagoda near the post. But my astonishment gave place to stupefaction when I learned that the sacred wood was permanently haunted by young Meo girls who accorded their favors to all who came beneath its discreet shade.

[624 The number of houses which make up a hamlet rarely exceeds
961] three or four. Even then the inhabitants usually are of the same stock,
631 and the head of the hamlet is naturally enough the progenitor of the
615 family group. The various hamlets of a small valley or of a little rocky cirque are grouped under the authority of a ma phai, who is properly speaking the chief of the village. Several villages are grouped under the authority of a ping tau, who fills the role of a giap truong or district chief in an Annamese commune, and who is himself assisted in his duties by a tsa thao. Finally, the different districts are joined together to form a tribe under the orders of a tung cha who fills the role of the mayor of a Tho commune, with a still greater
631 authority. This is the type of organization which exists in Dong Quan
609 and surrounding country, when the tribe is of a certain extent. If
563 it is less important, it is headed only by a ping tau or a simple ma phai, who is under the authority of the mayor of the Tho commune

631 on which the territory occupied by the tribe is dependant. It might
609 even happen that a simple Meo hamlet was overwhelmed in the midst
563 of a population of the Tho, Nung, or Man race. The inhabitants then naturally become pariahs, who suffer from the oppression because of the mass which surrounds them, and are very much more miserable than in the midst of a tribe of their race.

631 /138/ To the south of the Red River, at Tu Le for example, the
615 terms used to designate Meo chiefs are slightly different: the ma phai is replaced by the sou phai who sometimes has an assistant, seo phao. The tung cha becomes sung quan, but his assistant is called tsa thao, as above. Finally, in the rather large settlement of Phu Yen on the Black River, the chief of the great tribe bears the title hong ly.

Several of these titles refer to military functions, which tends to prove that in certain of their migrations the Meo must have organized themselves along military lines by force of arms. Ma phai means "he who keeps account of the horses"; ping tau, "troop commander"; and tung cha, "at the side of the chief of the canton."

Section 6

Economic State--Agriculture, Industry, Commerce

241 Thanks to his energy and diligence in working, the Meo
311 succeeds in improving and in drawing the maximum returns from a region where there are more rocks than arable land. It is indeed a curious sight to see him lead his ox and plough across a veritable chaos of black rocks which sometimes leave only a meagre square meter of land between them. At each step the plough turns up a bit of rock, which the tireless ploughman goes without delay and carries to the nearest heap of stones.

The principal crop is maize with which the Meo covers every bit of tillable land, the flanks of mountains and the bottoms of cirques or, at least, the thousand little pockets of humus which lie in the
241 spaces between the rocks. Seeds sown in April can be harvested in August. The Meo does not fertilize the soil all over. He is satisfied to spread a handful of manure at the precise spot where he plants his three grains of maize. Between the period of sowing and of harvest, the ground is cultivated three or four times, at first with a spade when the plant is scarcely out of the ground, then with the plough when it is larger. At harvest time maize is carried in /139/ pack-baskets and arranged in piles in the granaries, or hung in bunches of seven or